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U.S. SUPPORTED CORPORATIONS AND MODERN IMPERIALISM:
AMERICA'S TAKEOVER OF HAWAII

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U.S. SUPPORTED CORPORATIONS AND MODERN IMPERIALISM: AMERICA'S TAKEOVER OF HAWAII

In 1887, Hawaii was a constitutional monarchy led by King Kalakaua. However, his questionable spending habits and leadership skills led to domestic instability and economic downturn. Kalakaua made many laws which supported powerful foreigners from Asia. The Hawaiian ruler gave funds and influence to Chinese opium merchants, allowing them to control a large portion of the Hawaiian economy.¹ In 1887, there was a small uprising and the king was forced, by an armed militia, to create a new constitution supporting native Hawaiians as well as wealthy Europeans and Americans, but limiting the influence of Asians and poor foreigners. The king created the constitution under threat of force and signed it into law. The signing of this new constitution did nothing to help Kalakaua's public image. The constitution decreased the political power of non-white Hawaiians and many native Hawaiians criticized the king for giving too much power to the Americans and Europeans.² Although the opium trade had greatly decreased, the influence of foreigners had only shifted from one group to another. The political power granted to Western foreigners had increased so much that they had virtually unlimited

¹ Hawaii, *Laws of His Majesty Kalakaua, King of the Hawaiian Islands: Passed by the Legislative Assembly at its Session 1888* (Honolulu: Gazette Publishing Company, 1888).

² William De Witt Alexander, *Kalakaua's Reign: A Sketch of Hawaiian History* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Company, 1894), 6.

authority. This resulted in the establishment of many large sugar plantations which took over the Hawaiian economy.

Hawaii quickly developed a dependence on sugar exports³ to sustain its thriving, yet fragile, economy.⁴ This dependence left the government at the mercy of the plantation owners. The power of Chinese opium businesses had not been eliminated, but rather transferred to a different group of ruthless foreigners. A majority of the sugar growers were American or of American descent, and their primary consumer was the United States. By allowing the constitution of 1887 to replace Hawaii's previous system, King Kalakaua had forever tied his island nation to the politics of the Pacific.

Kalakaua's reign left native Hawaiians feeling ignored and betrayed by their own government. Already upset about the influence of opium merchants and the fiscal irresponsibility of the monarch, Hawaiians became even angrier with the development of the sugar plantations. Native Hawaiians criticized Kalakaua for allowing an Anglo-Saxon takeover to occur, an event which "has naturally resulted in the bestowment of political privileges, not otherwise enjoyed even by the Hawaiian people themselves."⁵ Asian immigrants, as well as Hawaiians of Japanese and Chinese descent, were opposed to the king's new constitution and the sudden power bestowed upon the Americans. They feared that the plantation owners would

³ There were 54 sugar plantations on the Hawaiian Islands in 1879. These plantations produced a total of more than 10,200 tons of sugar per year. Carol A. MacLennan, "Hawai'i Turns to Sugar: The Rise of Plantation Centers, 1860-1880," *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, 31:5 (January 1997), 98. For comparison, this was 170% greater than Cuba's sugar production of 6,000 tons per year. Nigel Hunt, "Introduction of Sugarcane Into Cuba," *Cuba Agriculture*, 1:2 (September 2010).

⁴ Isabella Lucy Bird, *The Hawaiian Archipelago* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1886).

⁵ William B. Oleson, *Some Elements in the Political Evolution of Hawaii* (Boston: Press of Rockwell and Churchill, 1893), 7.

grow too powerful and oppress Hawaiians not connected to America or Europe. Former American President Ulysses Grant had once told Chinese immigrants in Hawaii that although “the hostility of which they complained did not represent the sentiment of America,”⁶ there were Americans who “pander to prejudice against race or nationality and favor any measure of oppression that might advance their political interests.”⁷ Asian immigrants and Hawaiians of Asian ancestry were concerned that Grant’s warning foreshadowed future increases in American oppression. Both Asian and native Hawaiian populations presented their concerns to the king, but despite the grievances of his subjects, King Kalakaua maintained the 1887 constitution and remained the ruler of Hawaii until 1891. At that time, he fell ill while on a trip to San Francisco, California. He died of natural causes at the age of 54 in the San Francisco Palace Hotel.⁸ With the leader of the Hawaiian people and figurehead of the plantation controlled government gone, the island nation faced an uncertain future.

American sugar company owners immediately began seeking a way to establish themselves as the official leaders of Hawaii, convinced that the islanders adored the United States and desired a more American form of government. One notable plantation owner, Claus Spreckels, commented: “The native Hawaiian people look to America as their best friend... In other words, they know that their material prosperity depends upon the friendship of the United

⁶ Samuel Wells Williams, *Chinese Immigration* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1879), 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ George Worth Woods, *Medical Report to Hon. John A. Cummins, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the Last Illness and Death of Kalakaua I, King of Hawaii* (U.S. Flagship Charleston, 1891).

States.”⁹ This mentality was common among the wealthy Americans of Hawaii. Although they understood that Kalakaua’s power would fall to his successor, they expected the government to remain supportive of their enterprises. These Americans believed that their importance in the economy would give them enough power to control the new government the same way they had the old one.

Kalakaua’s sister, Liliuokalani, became the Queen of Hawaii. One of Liliuokalani’s first acts was to draft a new constitution to replace the 1887 version.¹⁰ Hawaii’s new queen despised the 1887 constitution because it highly favored Westerners while limiting the influence of natives.¹¹ She labeled it as “inconsistent, ambiguous and contradictory in its terms... subversive and restrictive of civil and popular rights, and incompatible with enlightened constitutional monarchial government.”¹² Liliuokalani’s revised constitution took away the suffrage rights of Americans and Europeans, attempting to allow only native Hawaiians to vote in elections.

Liliuokalani’s constitution also gave more power to the monarchy and decreased the authority of wealthy plantation owners.¹³ The Queen made it her mission to return political power back into the hands of native Hawaiians. She was also a pacifist and an isolationist with a strong sense of nationalism. In general, Queen Liliuokalani was a rather benevolent leader who

⁹ Claus Spreckels, “The Future of the Sandwich Islands,” *The North American Review*, 152:412 (March 1891), 287.

¹⁰ Henry E. Chambers, "Constitutional History of Hawaii," *The Johns Hopkins Press*, 14:9 (January 1896), 28.

¹¹ Oleson, 9.

¹² Hawaii Nation, *Draft Constitution of January 14, 1893* (Kingdom of Hawai’i Constitutions: Honolulu, 1893).

¹³ Chambers, 28.

wanted only what was best for her people. Nonetheless, Europeans and Americans felt threatened by the sudden shift in Hawaii's policies. The constitution and figurehead which had once protected Western interests had suddenly vanished and been replaced with a monarch bent on taking away plantation power.

Convinced that the sugar industry would soon lose its hold over Hawaii, wealthy sugar company owners began to slander the Queen and spread rumors that she was bringing Hawaii to ruin.¹⁴ One journalist who visited Hawaii wrote that "Queen Liliuokalani came to the throne, more per verse than her brother, more determined to restore native rule in its most aggravated form."¹⁵ Along with this notion that the Queen was undoing Hawaii's past progress, people often suggested that her attacks on American political influence would destroy the sugar industry and cripple the economy. Furthermore, Liliuokalani was criticized for her support of Chinese opium traders, a decision which, in the opinion of many, brought her policies too close to those of her late brother. Liliuokalani had passed the Opium Shop Bill which made it legal to issue licenses for the importation and sale of opium, stating "with a Chinese population of over twenty thousand persons, it is absolutely impossible to prevent smuggling, unlawful trade, bribery, corruption, and every abuse. There were more scandals connected with the opium traffic than I have the time to notice here."¹⁶ This policy was so controversial that the Queen eventually released a statement blaming the new ministers whom she had appointed for telling her to

¹⁴ Charles C. Burnett, *The Land of O-o: Facts, Figures, and Fancies* (Cleveland: Cleveland Printing and Publishing Company, 1892), 46.

¹⁵ Mary H. Krout, *Hawaii and a Revolution* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1898), ix.

¹⁶ Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1898), 241.

approve the bill.¹⁷ Furthermore, Liliuokalani dismissed all parliamentary members and replaced them with native Hawaiians loyal to her. Citizens with a stake in American influence as well as those who believed that the new queen led Hawaii in the wrong direction secretly convinced others to despise their new ruler. Dissatisfaction with the new monarch quickly spread and created a powerful minority group of opposition.

Liliuokalani was extremely nationalistic and wanted native Hawaiians to have all the power on the islands. This resulted from her experience watching Kalakaua be coerced by the foreign sugar companies and Hawaiian politics being taken over by those who did not care about natives with Hawaiian ancestry. The Queen desired more political authority for the monarchy for the sake of empowering Hawaiians.¹⁸ In an attempt to maintain Hawaii as a land of native Hawaiians, Liliuokalani created very strict immigration policies. These laws limited the number of new immigrants that could come from the United States, Europe, and even China.¹⁹ The Queen also decreased the amount of trade between Hawaii and foreign powers. Queen Liliuokalani was a strong believer in the power of isolationism. Her policies provided natives with increased political power and more social control. Native Hawaiian business owners also benefitted from the stabilization of internal markets as international imports were decreased and the Queen's policy of isolation decreased competition from larger Western corporations. As the

¹⁷ Lily Lim-Chong and Harry V. Ball, "Opium and the Law: Hawai'i, 1856–1900," *Chinese America: History & Perspectives – The Journal of the Chinese Historical Society of America*, 23:5 (2010), 67.

¹⁸ Henry J. Crocker, *A Compilation of Unofficial Data Relating to the Type-set Stamps of the Kingdom of Hawaii* (San Francisco: Henry J. Crocker, 1909), 15.

¹⁹ Chinese Bureau of the Department of Foreign Affairs, *The Laws and Regulations Restricting Chinese Immigration to the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Company, 1896), 9.

chairman of the Hawaiian annexation commission noted, “a trade has been built up, property acquired, and interests have become vested, which make the financial effect of the future American policy of more importance to Americans than it is to Hawaiians.”²⁰ With power being slowly taken away from foreigners, native Hawaiian culture and social status became stronger while Western influence began to wane.

Although the Queen’s campaign helped native Hawaiians, it threatened the security of American immigrants and plantation owners. The people who were already opposed to the Queen’s rule became even more upset with her leadership. With each new law she made to protect native Hawaiians, non-native Hawaiians became increasingly disloyal.²¹ Americans in Hawaii were upset about her acquisition of power for the monarchy and the way that she tried to cut off Hawaii from other nations. American businessmen’s requests to Liliuokalani for immigration reform and reestablishment of trade-routes were rejected because the Queen was determined not to make the same mistakes as her predecessor. The Queen was cautious of the Americans and determined to support Hawaiian natives. Unable to deal with this change, dissent grew among the upper-class foreigners in Hawaii.

Along with Liliuokalani’s new laws, plantation owners on the islands faced another imminent danger to their businesses. For many years, Hawaii had been exempt from tariff taxes to promote trade and the growth of businesses,²² but that changed when the United States passed

²⁰ Lorrin A. Thurston and George Ticknor Curtis, “The Sandwich Islands,” *The North American Review*, 156:436 (March 1893), 279.

²¹ Theophilus Harris Davies, “The Hawaiian Situation,” *The North American Review*, 156:438 (May 1893), 606.

²² Fredrick R. Clow, “Our Commercial Relations with the Hawaiian Islands,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 1:2 (March 1893), 280.

the McKinley Tariff²³ in 1890 and significantly raised the price of exporting sugar to America.²⁴ This made it more expensive for sugar companies to continue trade with their largest consumer and decreased profitability. The sugar companies faced a severe economic downturn. In 1893, a response group called the Committee of Safety was formed opposing the Queen. This group consisted primarily of American sugar plantation owners hoping to solve both of their problems with one movement. This Committee declared that it sought annexation to the United States so that Hawaiian businesses could continue trade without paying the new tariff. This would increase their profitability to its original heights and take away power from Liliuokalani. By diminishing the Queen's power, plantation owners hoped to avoid the effects of America's new foreign policy.

Claus Spreckels was particularly affected by the tariff because he owned Spreckelsville, which was known as "the largest sugar plantation in the world."²⁵ Spreckels also owned a large

²³ The McKinley Tariff was a major issue in U.S. politics during the late 1800s. William Gladstone, a former Prime Minister of England, advised the United States to adopt a free trade policy so that manufacturing industries would be able to produce goods at a lower price. "Gladstone on Free Trade," *Chicago Tribune*, 1:1 (January 29, 1893), sec. I, 4. However, Andrew Carnegie, a wealthy steel company owner and prominent businessman, was opposed to Gladstone's suggestion. Carnegie contended that America needed a protective tariff to defend its businesses from foreign competition. He believed that the United States was large enough to support itself solely upon its own industries, rendering free trade unnecessary and even harmful to the economy. Andrew Carnegie, "Summing Up the Tariff Discussion," *The North American Review*, 151:404 (July 1890), 51. After taking into consideration this difference between the U.S. and England, the new tariff was passed by Congress.

²⁴ John Ford, *Pocket Cyclopedia of Protection: Containing Facts and Figures on Every Phase of the Tariff Controversy* (New York: The Press, 1892), 78.

²⁵ Herbert Henry Gowen, *The Paradise of the Pacific: Sketches of Hawaiian Scenery and Life* (London: Skeffington & Son, 1892), 149.

Palace and was commonly referred to as the “Sugar King of Hawaii.”²⁶ He was strongly opposed to the American tariff and regularly attended Congress to lobby against it.²⁷ He was also a key member of the Committee of Safety and led the American businessmen in Hawaii when they believed their control was threatened.

Although Claus Spreckels and the American sugar companies had a great deal of power, they did not receive support from the Asian population, native Hawaiians, or lower-class. Groups unaffiliated with the sugar industry were faring well and remained largely unaffected by the American tariff, regardless of its effect on the sugar industry. Although sugar exports were an important part of the Hawaiian economy, the decline was not sharp enough to impact other industries. The tariff and Liliuokalani’s laws were fine for native Hawaiians and many others, but greatly decreased the economic and political power of sugar plantations.

The Committee of Safety took matters into their own hands when they began to plan a revolution. Understanding that Liliuokalani would never consider joining a foreign nation, this revolution was meant as a way to ensure that Hawaii would be annexed to the United States.²⁸ The Committee agreed that Sanford Dole would become the leader of the provisional government after the takeover of Liliuokalani’s kingdom. Dole had been part of the militia which forced King Kalakaua to create the constitution of 1887. Most members of this new rebellion were Hawaiian born but had parents who had come to the islands as missionaries and

²⁶ Helen Mather, *One Summer in Hawaii* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1891), 19.

²⁷ Uwe Spiekermann, “Claus Spreckels: A Biographical Case Study of Nineteenth-Century American Immigrant Entrepreneurship,” *Business and Economic History*, 8:1 (2010), 20.

²⁸ Belle M. Brain, *The Transformation of Hawaii* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898), 191.

businessmen. The plantation owners and rebels had been raised with the idea that native Hawaiians were lesser people and it was the duty of Americans to “civilise the people and give the country the government of a civilised nation.”²⁹ The fact that these Americans had grown up with the idea that eventually Hawaii would need to acquire an American form of government likely inspired their plans for revolution.

The rebels disapproved of Liliuokalani’s leadership tactics and policy choices. They also thought of her as weak and blamed her for the troubles of the sugar industry, later stating “she had little politicians for leaders instead of resolute soldiers when the revolution came which she had herself invoked.”³⁰ They saw their revolution as a response to injustice rather than a takeover for the sake of maintaining power. Uncertain of what the future held, the rebels gathered support for their planned revolution. Although those opposed to Liliuokalani were still a minority they had contacts, access to resources, and obscene amounts of wealth. The rebels gathered weapons and continued planning their takeover. The Committee of Safety only had 13 members, but they were still considered a threat to the crown. The wealthy Americans involved in the small group were determined to protect their power.

On January 16, 1893, the Hawaiian Chief of Police, Marshal Charles Wilson, wanted to arrest all members of the Committee of Safety to prevent them from doing anything dangerous. However, Liliuokalani and other government officials stopped him to maintain peace. Liliuokalani’s Buddhist philosophy prompted the Queen and her appointed parliament to avoid violence at all costs. Yet being only 13 in number, and unaware of Liliuokalani’s dedication to

²⁹ Krout, viii.

³⁰ Alfred R. Calhoun, *A Story of the Sandwich Islands Revolution* (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1893), 108.

non-violence, the Committee still feared for its safety. To defend themselves they called the American Minister to Hawaii, John Stevens, and told him that they were American citizens in Hawaii that needed protection.³¹ Minister Stevens, who already had close connections with the Committee, responded by ordering United States marines and naval forces to Hawaii: an illegal action because it was done without consulting either the U.S. President or Congress. These troops in Hawaii were given instructions to protect the Committee's American members from harm. The military responded quickly to the perceived threat and mobilized troops stationed on the *USS Boston* at anchor in Honolulu Harbor. A few hours later, 180 sailors and marines were organized as a shore party with full equipment.³²

A later investigation of that day's events, conducted by a U.S. appointed official and known as the Blount Report, concluded that "no evidence has been presented to Commissioner Blount to show that there was any apprehension or any desire for the presence ashore of the men of the 'Boston' under arms, except on the part of the members of the Citizens' Committee of Safety."³³ Minister Stevens's misuse of American military presence was in direct violation of the United States' general policy regarding military intervention at the time, regardless of the false claim that American lives were in danger. Secretary of State, Walter Gresham, wrote in a

³¹ Keanu Sai, interview by Aloha Quest, 19 December 1999, Honolulu, HI, video recording; available from <https://followingworldchange.wordpress.com/2014/11/29/attempted-overthrow-of-the-hawaiian-kingdom1893/>.

³² James H. Blount, *Report of U.S. Special Commissioner James H. Blount to U.S. Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham Concerning the Hawaiian Kingdom Investigation* [document online] (Honolulu: United States Special Commissioner, 1893, accessed 14 February 2015); available from <http://www.hawaiiankingdom.org/blounts-report.shtml>; Internet.

³³ Eugene Tyler Chamberlain and others, "The Hawaiian Situation," *The North American Review*, 157:445 (December 1893), 733. This article describes the arrival of American troops in Hawaii and their actions with great detail and is recommended for further reading on the subject.

letter to the investigation commissioner after the takeover of Hawaii, “historical precedents and the general course of the United States authorize the employment of its armed force in foreign territory for the security of the lives and property of American citizens and for the repression of lawless and tumultuous acts threatening them.”³⁴ Although the Committee of Safety claimed that it was in danger, in the end they were more of a threat to Hawaii than the Queen’s government was to them; Liliuokalani’s proven devotion to pacifism was in sharp contrast to the Committee of Safety’s history of aggression.

The day following the deployment of U.S. forces, supporters of the Committee continued to bring weapons to its 13 members. The Hawaiian police attempted to stop the distribution of these weapons, but were violently resisted. One of these police officers was shot and wounded by a Committee supporter.³⁵ This sudden violence was the catalyst which set the Committee of Safety into action. Realizing that they were already under heavy suspicion by the government and police, the Committee decided that immediate action was necessary to avoid jail time. The Committee gathered their weapons and went to the government building, Liliuokalani’s Iolani Palace. With them went their small army of American soldiers. It did not take them long to reach the building containing Parliament and the Queen.

The Committee members and American soldiers waited just outside the Palace. The Queen had a few armed guards and police officers defending the Palace, but before any fighting began she instructed her protectors to surrender. Still dedicated to her belief in non-violence, the Queen, the government, and her troops did not fight the Committee’s forces. Although the

³⁴ James H. Blount, *President’s Message Relating to the Hawaiian Islands* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1893), 2.

³⁵ "A Revolution in Hawaii," *New York Times*, 42:12,427 (January 29, 1893), sec. I, 1.

American troops were only under orders to defend Americans, the Queen had no knowledge of this and feared that there would be a battle. Liliuokalani likely avoided this confrontation because she was a pacifist, but also because it was fairly clear that her guards would lose any confrontation that occurred with the heavily armed American troops and Committee members. The surrender of the government made it so that the Committee of Safety did not need to use their soldiers, but it is probable that any confrontation would have led to the troops massacring Liliuokalani's guards.³⁶ After the capture of Iolani Palace, the Queen said "I do, under this protest... yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the actions of its representatives and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands."³⁷

The American Minister to Hawaii, Stevens, approved of the takeover and told the U.S. Secretary of State that "the Hawaiian pear is now fully ripe, and this is the golden hour for the United States to pluck it."³⁸ Stevens had sent troops to the Committee with an understanding of their goals. The Minister to Hawaii and other officials of similar political power wanted island nations like Hawaii to be controlled and under governments closer to that of United States in

³⁶ Some historians have written accounts of Hawaii claiming that the American show of force was only a bluff, one prominent book among these being Stephen Dando-Collins, *Taking Hawaii: How Thirteen Honolulu Businessmen Overthrew the Queen of Hawaii in 1893, With a Bluff* (New York: Open Road Media, 2014). However, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the Queen and her guards would not have been spared, and neither would the revolution have been called off, in the face of unexpected opposition. The Committee of Safety's members had used force before on King Kalakaua, premeditated the *coup* for a long time, and gone too far past the point of no return to feel safe calling off the rebellion. If the Committee members had been bluffing and then were opposed it would likely have ended in their executions. The fact that the U.S. troops were given orders to defend the Americans also contributes to the idea that they would have opened fire if faced with any opposition.

³⁷ Blount, *Report*.

³⁸ James Andrew Gillis, *The Hawaiian Incident: An Examination of Mr. Cleveland's Attitude Toward the Revolution of 1893*, (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1897), 9.

function, economy, and culture. The imperialism of the United States had begun to spread beyond the North American continent. Hawaii was one of the first countries to be taken over. This island nation was considered a simple acquisition for the U.S. by many because of the Queen's pacifism, the strong American presence, and the cause which could be rallied behind it. This cause was the defense of American economic interests abroad, or put more simply the defense of the upper-class. Although the influence of Hawaiian sugar companies had been decreasing on the islands, it had remained as strong as ever in the United States. The fact that the rebels were wealthy Americans with power in Hawaii as well as a stake in the U.S. economy was reason enough for politicians and government officials associated with Hawaii to support the *coup*.

The islands were also considered strategic holdings for military purposes due to their location in the Pacific. Hawaii provided good locations for building naval bases. The combined influence of possible economic and military power prompted American support for the small resistance movement. The *coup* was an effort put forth for the sake of strengthening American imperialism and granting the wishes of powerful businessmen. This union between governmental and upper-class interests led to the creation of an entity with virtually limitless power. After the takeover of Hawaii, sugar plantation owners had even more power than they did under the constitution of 1887.

The new provisional government asserted the control of American plantation owners. Their earliest laws provided structure for this new government and made it a democracy similar to the United States, however, it limited the voting rights of Hawaiians who were not of American or European origin. The Americans also created Act 12, a law prohibiting the

importation and sale of opium.³⁹ This provisional government systematically replaced each of Liliuokalani's laws for native Hawaiian protection with ones favoring the Americans, including the Queen's limited immigration laws being altered to further limit Asia but encourage immigration from America. The provisional government even went so far as to deny citizenship to all Chinese immigrants, a policy mirroring that of the United States and designed to maintain American control of the islands. These changes in immigration caused a major influx of Americans to the islands and had the effect of greatly diminishing the influence of native Hawaiian culture as ancient traditions were replaced with American customs.

Hawaii's new government also blatantly supported their own interests. Act 24 established corporations as persons in court cases⁴⁰ and implied that this policy of company personhood would carry over to other matters. This law would protect their interests in the business world as well as their political power. Another important law was Act 3, which declared that the punishment for treason was death.⁴¹ The Committee of Safety wanted to ensure that no one would rise up against them as they had themselves against the former monarchy of Hawaii. The laws of the provisional government were designed for the sole purpose of protecting American interests in Hawaii and establishing sugar companies as the ruling power over the islands. The fact that Hawaii had been essentially taken over by corporations rather than individual rebels greatly impacted the structure of the new government, the laws it created, and the actions of its leaders.

³⁹ Hawaii, *Laws of the Provisional Government of the Hawaiian Islands Passed by the Executive and Advisory Councils: Acts 1 to 42* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Company, 1893), 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

The provisional government was led by appointed president Sanford Dole. Dole had no sugar company of his own, but he was a long-time friend of the other Committee of Safety members. These members likely made Dole the president in an attempt to artificially distance their sugar plantations from the takeover. By allowing a slightly more neutral person with a history of rebellion against the monarchy to be the new leader, they made it more difficult for the sugar industry to be blamed for the overthrow of Liliuokalani. President Dole then used his authority to support Hawaii's American upper-class and the sugar companies that they controlled. Another driving force for Dole's rise to presidency was a desire to support his cousin, James Dole. Sanford Dole's cousin owned a fruit company and benefited greatly from access to Hawaiian resources. To aid both his friends and his cousin with their businesses, Dole wholeheartedly accepted his new position. In his inaugural address he justified his support of corporations by saying "business is shortsighted and will not strive for the ideal unless it pays to do so."⁴²

When news of the provisional government reached the United States, Secretary of State John Foster responded with a letter to the U.S. Minister to Hawaii saying "it is not thought probable that the Provisional Government of the Hawaiian Islands, in soliciting protection, contemplated more than the cooperation of the moral and material forces of the United States to strengthen its own authority and power as a recognized sovereign Government for the protection of life and property."⁴³ America seemed to formally approve of the new government, despite the

⁴² Thomas G. Thrum, *All About Hawaii: The Recognized Book of Authentic Information on Hawaii, Combined with Thrum's Hawaiian Annual and Standard Guide* (Honolulu: Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 1900), 57.

⁴³ Grover Cleveland, *Relations with Hawaii: Instructions to Diplomatic and Naval Officers Relating to Hawaiian Affairs Since March 1, 1881* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1893), 30.

United States' close connection with Hawaii's fallen monarchy. Liliuokalani never received help from Congress, and the provisional government became established as the official government of Hawaii. Although there was no official acknowledgment of the provisional government, it was made clear that the United States would not intervene on the Queen's behalf. The Secretary of State, Minister to Hawaii, and Congress were all supportive of the provisional government.

Despite the assertions of Congress and John Foster, many American Progressives were opposed to the provisional government of Hawaii. Most prominent among these progressives was President Grover Cleveland. In his 1893 inaugural address, he stated that "our relations with Hawaii have caused serious embarrassment" and "upon the facts developed it seemed to me the only honorable course for our Government to pursue was to undo the wrong that had been done by those representing us and to restore as far as practicable the status existing at the time of our forcible intervention."⁴⁴ President Cleveland also ordered an investigation of the takeover to be conducted by James Blount.

During the investigation, Blount pieced together the story of how the Committee of Safety had received American marines for their assault on Iolani Palace and taken over Honolulu. Blount accused John Stevens and John Foster of conspiracy to overthrow the Hawaiian monarchy, saying that "the suddenness of the landing of the United States troops, the reading of the proclamation of the Provisional Government almost in their presence, and the quick recognition by Mr. Stevens" made the event seem premeditated, well organized, and supported

⁴⁴ Grover Cleveland, *Inaugural Address of Grover Cleveland, March 4, 1893* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1893), 9.

by the American Minister to Hawaii.⁴⁵ In this report, he posited that the continued prosperity of sugar companies was the only reason for the so-called revolution and that “a deep wrong has been done the Queen and the native race by American officials.”⁴⁶ This report was very concerning to President Cleveland and many middle-class American progressives. This was a step toward European-like imperialism of which many Americans did not approve. Furthermore, Americans feared that Hawaii would be annexed to the United States and begin an era of expansion off the mainland. In an open letter to Secretary Gresham, ex-commissioner Charles Carter wrote rebuttals against each stated reason for the revolution and concluded that “the request for the immediate support of the United States forces, contained in Mr. Dole’s letter, of itself should indicate that up to that moment there had been no such support, and furthermore was intended only for that night and for the purpose of patrolling the town.”⁴⁷ Carter saw through the Committee of Safety’s official reasons for the revolution and understood the imperialistic nature of the rebellion. Yet despite these grievances, the progressives, the president, and the general public could do to nothing to return Hawaii back to its former state. The *coup* had already ended and Congress had supported it.

For two years there were no new developments, but in 1895 tensions between the provisional government and native Hawaiians reached their breaking point. Asian immigrants and native Hawaiians initiated and began to fight the Americans in a counter-revolution. One of the leaders of this uprising was Queen Liliuokalani. The dethroned monarch was opposed to

⁴⁵ Blount, *Report*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Charles L. Carter, *The Hawaiian Question: An Open Letter to Secretary Gresham* (Honolulu: Star Publishing Company Limited, 1893), 8.

violence, but equally passionate about Hawaiian independence. After realizing that no support from the United States would come, the rebellion began gathering strength in members and equipment. It was not difficult for Liliuokalani and her followers to gain support as most Hawaiians and Asians had been left disenfranchised by the provisional government. The true leader of the rebellion was Robert Wilcox, a man who had previously been aligned with the owners of the sugar plantations. Wilcox had been a member of the group that forced King Kalakaua to rewrite the constitution, but had done so for the sake of helping the Hawaiian economy. Wilcox was disturbed by the way that the Committee of Safety had taken Hawaii away from the natives. In response to this injustice he was the chief organizer of the movement to reinstate Liliuokalani as queen.

The counter-revolution was brief, consisting of only three battles. Although they had slight support from the governments of China and Japan, the rebels were easily defeated by the provisional government's forces. All of the revolutionaries were either captured or killed. All were sentenced to death under Act 3, but that was primarily just to make a statement. President Dole pardoned all counter-revolution soldiers and only imprisoned the leaders. Both Liliuokalani and Wilcox were among those placed in prison. The revolution had failed and the sugar plantation owners became more firmly established as the ruling power of Hawaii than ever before.

Following the failed counter-revolution of 1895 the provisional government began Liliuokalani's life-long imprisonment. Locked up in Iolani Palace, the former queen spent her time writing many songs including "*Aloha Oe*", translated as "Farewell to Thee". This song described the loss of Hawaiian independence and native Hawaiian culture. The Queen also

wrote memoirs about her view of what had transpired in Hawaii.⁴⁸ Liliuokalani stated that American support had been Hawaii's only hope for sovereignty, and without this support it would be impossible for Hawaiians to escape the influence of sugar plantation owners. The Queen continued her dedication to non-violence, and protection of the Hawaiian people, by requesting that there be no more attempts at counter-revolution.

Many Americans, particularly progressives like President Cleveland, were upset by the imprisonment of Liliuokalani. These Americans were opposed to U.S. intervention in Hawaiian affairs in support of the provisional government. Forcing a monarch to abdicate the throne when that monarch posed no real threat to American interests was contradictory to the values held by the general public at the time of the Hawaiian takeover. Hawaii was taken over for the sake of supporting the upper-class and resulted in a decent ruler being sentenced for life. This imprisonment of the former queen in her own palace became a rallying point for progressives demonstrating the imperialistic nature of Congress's foreign policy. Fearing that the Queen's sentence would spark a second attempt at rebellion despite her plea for peace, President Dole pardoned Liliuokalani a year after she was imprisoned. Yet Wilcox remained in jail, and common Americans, without a stake in the sugar industry or Hawaiian politics, continued to grow dissatisfied with the treatment of Hawaiian nationalists. After being pardoned, Liliuokalani went to Washington, D.C. and attempted to regain Hawaiian sovereignty. This effort was unsuccessful, and the islands grew closer to becoming part of the United States.

However, a majority of American citizens opposed the possible annexation of Hawaii. Many Americans disliked the idea of adding the island chain to the U.S. and incorporating the

⁴⁸ The Queen's most comprehensive memoir was Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1898).

new culture. Others opposed the new territory because of the reasons behind its annexation. On Tuesday, March 2, 1893, a New York newspaper, *The Nation*, had published an article stating “evidence accumulates that the Hawaiian Revolution was a revolution of sugar by sugar and for sugar”,⁴⁹ so the American public was aware of the truth behind the takeover. Americans were upset by the government’s defense of upper-class business interests. Many people noted that while annexation would expand American military power and protect sugar plantation owners from tariffs, it would also greatly reduce the power of average Hawaiians.

In an attempt to restore Hawaii’s former sovereignty, President Cleveland requested that the provisional government be dissolved, the revolutionaries returned power to Liliuokalani, and the Queen grant amnesty to the Committee which overthrew her. The former queen refused to grant amnesty to Committee of Safety members, but nonetheless Cleveland continued to ask Congress for support. Grover Cleveland was determined to limit American imperialism because he believed that it was a slippery slope to creating colonies. He feared that this American expansion was reminiscent of the European ones opposed by the United States for so long.

Yet even Senator George Hoar of Massachusetts, a man strongly against imperialism, gave a speech opposing the President’s position on the Hawaii issue. He contended that “there can be no question that the Government which was in power in Hawaii at the last advices is a friendly government. It established itself without violence, after an attempt on the part of the Queen to commit an act of revolution and usurpation.”⁵⁰ Hoar believed that Liliuokalani’s attempt to protect native Hawaiians was an assault on the political power of wealthy Americans,

⁴⁹ "The Week," *The Nation*, 56:1,444 (March 2, 1893), sec. III, 151.

⁵⁰ George Frisbie Hoar, *Colloquy with Mr. Vilas* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1893), 4.

a party which he considered to be “important in regard to numbers, in regard to character, in regard to intelligence, and in regard to property.”⁵¹ He argued that interference in Hawaii’s internal affairs would be an act of war. Senator Hoar justified American involvement in the overthrow of Liliuokalani by stating that “the Provisional Government in Hawaii, whatever may be the fate of that commonwealth, will have an honorable place in the history of human liberty. The United States forces have been withdrawn... there is no report of a life lost, a human being injured, or a single act of disorder.”⁵² Hoar demonstrated to President Cleveland that even Progressive legislators were in favor of Hawaii’s new government. This blatant defense of the upper-class was supported by a majority of senators and representatives in Congress. The President’s plea for correcting America’s infringement of Hawaiian sovereignty was rejected by Democrats and Republicans alike. Unable to change the course of Hawaii’s development, Cleveland left the White House at the end of his term and passed the problem of Hawaii on to Congress and the next president.

Yet the McKinley administration’s first challenge was in the Atlantic rather than the Pacific. The new president had to deal with a revolution in Cuba that hurt American business interests. Without the Cleveland administration to keep Congress in check, the United States began greatly increasing support for the upper-class and adopted a foreign policy of imperialism. To justify aiding the Cuban revolutionaries, the United States accused Spain of destroying an American battleship.⁵³ Regardless of the lack of evidence for this claim, the Spanish-American

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁵³ Although initial reports determined that the explosion was caused by a Spanish mine, later investigations determined that the battleship *Maine* was destroyed by an internal

War began. President McKinley and Congress declared war on Spain for the purpose of defending American interests in the Atlantic and Pacific. They also promised that after the war, Cuba would be given independence. President McKinley maintained American cooperation with Hawaii's new government in order to support U.S. forces during the war. The United States had plans to control the Pacific by quickly taking over the Spanish held Philippines, and Hawaii was an important part of that plan. Unlike his predecessor, William McKinley saw the American approved takeover of Hawaii as a necessary military action rather than unjustified imperialism. By starting a war with Spain, America gained access to island colonies and justified the takeover of Hawaii. McKinley's strong desire to claim Hawaii despite public opinion was shown in a comment by Henry Cabot Lodge, who said that "the president has been very firm about it and means to annex the Islands any way."⁵⁴ The war with Spain served the dual purposes of protecting American interests in the Caribbean and retroactively justifying America's support of Sanford Dole. The Spanish-American War accomplished both goals; control of Hawaii helped the United States achieve victory, and fighting the war supported Hawaii's new government. America's new policy of militarism and imperialism was evident from the start of McKinley's presidency. The overthrow of Hawaii's monarchy was sanctioned by the U.S. to support American plantation owners and start a chain reaction of imperialist actions such as the taking of Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico as territories.

malfunction. Kenneth E. Hendrickson Jr., *The Spanish-American War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 8.

⁵⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, "Lodge to Roosevelt, June 15, 1898", in *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge*, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), vol. I, 311.

The way Hawaii was simply picked-up by the United States on the way to the Philippines signaled the start of a new era. The overthrow of Hawaii demonstrated the United States' capacity for expansion off the mainland and marked the beginning of America's new foreign policy. A Supreme Court decision was even made allowing the U.S. to make such acquisitions. As one author put it, "for temporary commercial purposes, indeed, we have the warrant of the Supreme Court for saying that the President, with the authority of Congress, can acquire any island, however remote, and make it, while retained, a part of the United States."⁵⁵ This off-hand imperialism found throughout the story of Hawaii became America's primary practice for many years to come.

America's involvement in the development of Hawaii produced a series of effects, such as setting a precedent for American foreign policy in the early twentieth century, establishing the United States as a more global power, eliminating European influence in North America, and getting the U.S. involved in the Pacific arena. However, at the root of these developments American actions in Hawaii were primarily for the sake of military control and supporting the upper-class; public opinion, as well as considerations for the general American public and Hawaiian natives, were ignored.

⁵⁵ Simeon Eben Baldwin, *The Historic Policy of the United States as to Annexation* (New Haven: Hoggson & Robinson, 1893), 405.

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